

Sue Collins, Khachaturian Violin Concerto with improvised cadenza



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inspire.



It was an inspiring afternoon of entertainment as a particularly enthusiastic audience broke into rapturous applause throughout the NSW Doctors Orchestra Fundraising concert yesterday.

The Orchestra's annual fundraising concert for the NSW Drs Orchestra Sydney Eisteddfod Instrumental Scholarship had a great turnout yesterday when 80 medical professionals and students filled The Concourse Concert Hall stage to present *From Russia With Love*.

Founder and director Dr Cathy Fraser said they felt privileged to have a soloist of the calibre and talent of Sydney Eisteddfod alumna Susan Collins, who played the *Khachaturian Violin Concerto* "absolutely brilliantly while the whole orchestra rose to the occasion".

"We were especially moved by an encore of an Armenian folk song played by Susan and our conductor Dr David Banney as he paid tribute to Dr Brian Shearman (who passed away in January) by playing his violin," Dr Fraser said.

"There were tears on and off the stage in memory of a very special member of our orchestra."

After last year's debut on the NSW Doctor's Orchestra stage, former Governor of NSW Professor the Honourable Dame Marie Bashir AD CVO returned with her violin to join the orchestra and delight the audience once again.

On behalf of the organisation, Sydney Eisteddfod Chief Executive Piroozi Desai-Keane OAM extends her appreciation to the support shown by Professor Marie Bashir and all the audience members who attended.

"I would also like to say a special thank you to Dr Cathy Fraser, Conductor David Banney and all the wonderful doctors from the NSW Doctors Orchestra for donating their time to raise funds for the NSW Drs Orchestra Sydney Eisteddfod Instrumental Scholarship once again," she said.

"Each year this life-changing scholarship takes one talented instrumentalist one step closer to achieving his or her dream."

Proceeds from the concert will also benefit Freedom Across Australia, a charity that provides escorted touring for people with disability throughout Australia.

Interview with Susan Collins

About the new cadenza

Susan Collins is undertaking research into cadenzas and concerti of the core repertoire. Today she will be playing her own cadenza in the Khachaturian Violin concerto. Here she is interviewed about it by Prof Johannes Fritsch of UTAS.

JF: You have written a new cadenza for the Khachaturian concerto. Is this one by Khachaturian himself or others?

SC: Yes, there are two great and well known cadenzas. The first was composed by Khachaturian himself, but more often performed is the cadenza composed by David Oistrach, for whom the concerto was written.

JF: Why did you want to write your own cadenza?

SC: I tend to prefer 'newly composed' cadenzas over those that are well known, because it allows for a different type of communication with the audience. It allows the performer to step out of the composition for a moment and speak to the audience almost as a 'narrator' does, to elucidate part of the musical 'story'.

While Oistrach's cadenza is more lyrical than the cadenza by Khachaturian, both of the standard cadenzas magnify the harsh dissonances and focus on the unrelenting rhythmic features of the concerto. I wanted to draw more upon the lush, Armenian folk and Klezmer foundations of the thematic material, which are particularly lyrical and 'violinistic', and which contrast the rhythmic brutality of the first movement.

The tonality of D is often chosen for violin concertos. Although Khachaturian used D minor for his violin concerto rather than the more prevalent D major, I wanted to give reference to some of the most celebrated violin concertos that are also in the tonality of D, notably those by Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Brahms and Sibelius. These works played a vital role in establishing the violin concerto as a major symphonic work, which necessarily impacted upon the stature of Khachaturian's composition for the genre.

JF: How much improvisation should a cadenza ideally have?

SC: Let's just say that a cadenza is most effective for me if it brings something new to the concerto, while reflecting upon the composition. That could include improvisation, or perhaps simply the illusion that one is improvising. This is not to suggest that one should appear not to know what is coming next. My Jazz improvisation teacher in Bloomington, Dr David Baker, once said to the class: "You don't seriously think even the greatest jazz players would turn up to a gig without any idea what they were going to play?"

JF: Do you think you will improvise in the concert on your own cadenza?

SC: All being well the notes that I play will have been prepared beforehand. Spontaneity for me comes from having a pretty good idea of what the options are, what direction something can go in, and making choices based on what has worked for me in the past. It is also helpful for a conductor to know when to bring the orchestra back in...

